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A HIGHLAND REGIMENT

A HIGHLAND REGIMENT
BY E. A. MACKINTOSH, M.C.
LT. SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS

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To
THE OFFICERS AND MEN
OF THE 5TH SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS
AND ESPECIALLY TO
MAJOR A. L. MACMILLAN
WHO IS AND WILL BE
TO ME AS TO ALL THE REST
THE MAJOR FOR EVER

CONTENTS

I

	PAGE
TO A PRIVATE SOLDIER	11
ANNS AN GHLEANN'SAN ROBH MI OG	13
FROM A WAR STATION	15
CHA TILL MACCRUIMEIN	16
TO A DEAD SOLDIER	18
THE WAITING WIFE	20
CHRIST IN FLANDERS	21
HARVEST	22
OXFORD FROM THE TRENCHES	24
MISERERE	25
THE UNDYING RACE	27
IN NO MAN'S LAND	29
SNOW IN FRANCE	31
τέτλαθι δὴ κράδίη	33
MATRI ALMAE	35
BEFORE THE SUMMER	37
TO MY SISTER	38
IN MEMORIAM	40
A CREED	43
PEACE UPON EARTH	44
	7

	PAGE
THE VOLUNTEER	47
ON VIMY RIDGE	48
IN MEMORIAM—R. M. STALKER	50

II

THE KINGDOM OF THE DOWNS	55
TO THE UNKNOWN LOVE	57
TO CATTULLUS	58
MALLAIG BAY	59
VERSES TO TWO CHILDREN	60
IN THE NIGHT	61
CAROL OF THE INNOCENTS	62
WANDERER'S DESIRE	64
GROWING PAINS	66
SONNET	70
TO —	71
DEAD YOUTH	72
AT THE END	74
ECCLESIASTES	75
THE LOST LANDS	77
CLYTEMNESTRA	79
DEDICATION	81
THREE SONGS FROM THE REMEMBERED GODS	82
NEIL'S SONG	86
OLD AGE	88
THE HEARTLESS VOICE	90
HOPE	91
THE LAST MEETING	93
VALE ATQUE AVE	95

A HIGHLAND REGIMENT

TO A PRIVATE SOLDIER

THE air is still, the light winds blow
Too quietly to wake you now.
Dreamer, you dream too well to know
Whose hand set death upon your brow.
The shrinking flesh the bullets tore
Will never pulse with fear again ;
Sleep on, remembering no more
Your sudden agony of pain.

Oh, poor brave smiling face made naught,
Turned back to dust from whence you came,
You have forgot the men you fought,
The wounds that burnt you like a flame ;
With stiff hand crumbling a clod,
And blind eyes staring at the sky,
The awful evidence of God
Against the men who made you die.

You have forgotten, sleeping well,
But what of them ? shall they forget
Your body broken with the shell,
Your brow whereon their seal is set ?
Does earth for them hold any place
Where they shall never see the flies
Clustered about your empty face
And on your blind, accusing eyes ?

Good-night, good sleep to you. But they
Will never know good-night again,
Whose eyes are seeing night and day,
The humble men who died in vain.
Their ears are filled with bitter cries,
Their nostrils with the powder smell,
And shall see your mournful eyes
Across the reeking fires of hell.

ANNS AN GLEANN'SAN
ROBH MI OG

IN the Glen where I was young
Blue-bell stems stood close together,
In the evenings dew-drops hung
Clear as glass above the heather.
I'd be sitting on a stone,
Legs above the water swung,
I a laddie all alone,
In the glen where I was young.

Well, the glen is empty now,
And far am I from them that love me,
Water to my knees below,
Shrapnel in the clouds above me ;
Watching till I sometimes see,
Instead of death and fighting men,

The people that were kind to me,
And summer in the little glen.

Hold me close until I die,
Lift me up, it's better so ;
If, before I go, I cry,
It isn't I'm afraid to go ;
Only sorry for the boy
Sitting there with legs aswung
In my little glen of joy,
In the glen where I was young.

AUGUST, 1914

FROM A WAR STATION

To A. K. F.

I N Oxford now the lamps are lit,
The city bells ring low,
And up and down the silent town
The ghosts of friendship go.

With whispering laughs they meet and pass
As we were used to do,
And somewhere in the airy crowd
My spirit walks with you.

The troopers quarter in the rooms
That once were yours and mine,
And you are lying out to-night
Behind the firing-line.

But still in rooms that were our own
We wander, you and I,
And night and day our spirits walk
Along the empty High.

GOLSPIE, 1915

CHA TILL MACCRUIMEIN

DEPARTURE OF THE 4TH CAMERONS

THE pipes in the street were playing bravely,
The marching lads went by,
With merry hearts and voices singing
My friends marched out to die ;
But I was hearing a lonely pibroch
Out of an older war,
“ Farewell, farewell, farewell, MacCrimmon,
MacCrimmon comes no more.”

And every lad in his heart was dreaming
Of honour and wealth to come,
And honour and noble pride were calling
To the tune of the pipes and drum ;
But I was hearing a woman singing
On dark Dunvegan shore,
“ In battle or peace, with wealth or honour,
MacCrimmon comes no more.”

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

We regret to say that since the second edition of this volume was published the author has been killed in action.

It is hoped to issue shortly a posthumous volume of his poems and prose pieces, which will bear the title of "WAR THE LIBERATOR," and will contain a Memoir and a Portrait.

And there in front of the men were marching,
With feet that made no mark,
The grey old ghosts of the ancient fighters
Come back again from the dark ;
And in front of them all MacCrimmon piping
A weary tune and sore,
“ On the gathering day, for ever and ever,
MacCrimmon comes no more.”

BEDFORD, 1915

TO A DEAD SOLDIER

SO I shall never see you more.
The northern winds will blow in vain
Brave and heart-easing off the shore.
You will not sail with them again.
I shall not see you wait for me
Where on the beach the dulse is brown,
Nor hear at night across the sea
Your chorus of the Nighean doun.

Are you so easy handled now
That Flanders soil can keep you still
Although the northern breezes blow
All day across the fairy's hill?
And can an alien lowland clay
Hold fast your soul and body too,
Or will you rise and come away
To where our friendship waits for you?

You cannot rest so far from home,
Your heart will miss the northern wind,
Back from the lowland fields will come,
Your soul the grave can never bind.
Once more your hands will trim the sail
That carries us across the bay
To where the summer islands pale
Over the seas and far away.

And you will sail and watch with me
The things we saw and loved before,
The happy islands of the sea,
The breakers white against the shore.
A hundred joys that we held dear
Will call you from the Flanders town,
And in the evenings I shall hear
Your chorus of the Nighean doun.

BEDFORD, 1915

THE WAITING WIFE

OUT on the hillside the wild birds crying,
A little low wind and the white clouds flying,
A little low wind from the southward blowing,
What should I know of its coming and going ?

Over the battle the shrapnel crying
A tune of lament for the dead and the dying,
And a little low wind that is moaning and weeping
For the mouths that are cold and the brave hearts sleeping.

I and my man were happy together
In the summer days and the warm June weather—
What is the end of our laughter and singing ?
A little low wind from the southward winging.

The hearth is cold and my house is lonely,
And nothing for me but waiting only,
Feet round the house that come into it never,
And a voice in the wind that is silent for ever.

GOLSPIE, 1915

CHRIST IN FLANDERS

O H, you that took our sin and pain
Upon your shoulders long ago,
Are you come back to earth again,
About the battle do you go ?
By trenches where with bitter cries
Men's spirits leave their tortured clay,
Oh, wanderer with the mournful eyes,
Are you on Flanders soil to-day ?

The battle fog is wreathed and curled
Before us, that we cannot see
The darkness of the newer world
As your eternal agony,
The gallant hearts, the bitter blood,
The pains of them that have not died,
A bright light in the eyes of God
And a sharp spear-point in his side.

Church Parade, 1915

HARVEST

A LONG the dusty highway,
And through the little town,
The people of the country
Are riding up and down.
Behind the lines of fighting
They gather in all day
The harvest, folk are reaping
At home and far away.

If on the hills about us,
Where now the thrush sings low,
The face of earth were bitter,
It would not hurt us so.
Though earth grew strange and savage
And all the world were new,
It would not tear our memory
The way the cornfields do.

Oh, you that fought your battles
Beneath the Southern Cross,
The earth was kinder to you,
You could not feel your loss,
Nor waken every morning
And clear before you see
The grassy fields and meadows
Where you would wish to be.

But in a haunted corn-land
We move, as in a dream
Of quiet hills and hedges
And a swift-flowing stream,
And on the hills about us
Through all the din of war,
The home that we were born in,
And we shall see no more.

BUIRE-SUR-ANCRE, 1915

OXFORD FROM THE TRENCHES

THE clouds are in the sky, and a light rain falling,
And through the sodden trench splashed figures come
and go,
But deep in my heart are the old years calling,
And memory is on me of the things I used to know.

Memory is on me of the warm dim chambers,
And the laughter of my friends in the huge high-ceilinged hall,
Lectures and the voices of the dons deep-droning,
The things that were so common once—O God, I feel them all.

Here there are the great things, life and death and danger,
All I ever dreamed of in the days that used to be,
Comrades and good-fellowship, the soul of an army,
But, oh, it is the little things that take the heart of me.

For all we knew of old, for little things and lovely,
We bow us to a greater life beyond our hope or fear,
To bear its heavy burdens, endure its toils unheeding,
Because of all the little things so distant and so dear.

BÉCOURT, 1915

MISERERE

GONE is now the boast of power,
Strength to strike our foes again,
God of battles in this hour
Give us strength to suffer pain.
Lest the spirit's chains be rent,
Lest the coward flesh go free
Unto thee our prayer is sent,
Miserere Domine.

Death unseen beneath our feet,
Death above us in the sky,
Now before Thy judgment-seat
Grant us honourably to die.
Lustful, sinful, careless all,
In the martyr's road are we.
Lest from that high path we fall,
Miserere Domine.

Men that mocked Thee to Thy face,
Fools who took Thy name in vain—
Grant that in this deadly place
Jests and blasphemy remain.
On the pallid face of death,
Gasping slow and painfully
Curses with its latest breath,
Miserere Domine.

Where we see the men we know
Rags of broken flesh and bone,
And the thing that hurt them so
Seems to wait for us alone,
Where the silence of the grave
Broods and threatens soundlessly,
On the souls we cannot save,
Miserere Domine.

LA BOISSELLE, 1915

THE UNDYING RACE

HERE in the narrow broken way
Where silently we go,
Steadfast above their valiant clay
Forgotten crosses show.
Our whispers call to many a ghost
Across the flare-light pale,
And from their graves the Breton host
Stand up beside the Gael.

Year upon year of ancient sleep
Have rusted on our swords,
But once again our place we keep
Against the Saxon hordes.
Since Arthur ruled in Brittany,
And all the world was new,
The fires that burned our history,
Burn in our spirits too.

One speech beyond their memory
 Binds us together still,
One dream of home wherein we see
 River and sea and hill.
When in the night-time Fingal's peers
 Fight their old wars again,
The blood of twice two thousand years
 Leaps high in every vein.

Old songs that waked King Arthur's knights
 Stir in our memory yet,
Old tales of olden heroes fights
 That we cannot forget,
To die as Fingal's warriors died
 The great men long ago,
Breton and Gael stand side by side
 Against the ancient foe.

LA BOISSELLE, 1915

IN NO MAN'S LAND

THE hedge on the left, and the trench on the right,
And the whispering, rustling wood between,
And who knows where in the wood to-night
Death or capture may lurk unseen,
The open field and the figures lying
Under the shade of the apple trees—
Is it the wind in the branches sighing,
Or a German trying to stop a sneeze ?

Louder the voices of night come thronging,
But over them all the sound is clear,
Taking me back to the place of my longing
And the cultured sneezes I used to hear,
Lecture-time and my tutor's " handker "
Stopping his period's rounded close,
Like the frozen hand of the German ranker
Down in a ditch with a cold in his nose.

I'm cold, too, and a stealthy snuffle
From the man with a pistol covering me,
And the Bosche moving off with a snap and a shuffle
Break the windows of memory—
I can't make sure till the moon gets lighter—
Anyway shooting is over bold.
Oh, damn you, get back to your trench, you blighter,
I really can't shoot a man with a cold.

HAMMERHEAD WOOD

THIEPVAL, 1915

SNOW IN FRANCE

THE tattered grass of No Man's Land
Is white with snow to-day,
And up and down the deadly slopes
The ghosts of childhood play.

The sentries, peering from the line,
See in the tumbled snow
Light forms that were their little selves
A score of years ago.

We look and see the crumpled drifts
Piled in a little glen,
And you are back in Saxony
And children once again.

From joyous hand to laughing face
We watch the snow-balls fly,
The way they used ere we were men
Waiting our turn to die.

To-night across the empty slopes
The shells will scream once more,
And flares go up and bullets fly
The way they did before ;

But for a little space of peace
We watch them come and go,
The children that were you and I
At play among the snow.

BOIS D'AUTHUILLE, 1915

τέτλαθι δὴ κραδίη

WHERE the light wraith of death goes dancing
In and out of the wavering line,
Now retreating and now advancing
Till opposite you he makes the sign,
Though the wind of his breath be on you,
Though in your flesh you feel the smart,
There have been worse things laid upon you,
Be steadfast and endure my heart.

There is no need of honour for you,
There is no gift the gods can send,
Only the weary days before you,
Only endurance to the end.
This remains that in all temptation
Still your head shall be lifted high.
You that have known a worse damnation,
Why should you be afraid to die ?

You that are dead and damned already,
How should you be afraid of death?
Strength remains to you firm and steady
Enduring still to your latest breath,
Eyes to see and ears for hearing,
Things and words you would fain forget,
And anger to slay the snake of fearing
That lives in the heart of the dead man yet.

Fear? If hope is a thing forgotten,
What can you fear the gods will do?
If the heart and kernel of life is rotten
What is the husk to trouble you?
Stand up straight to your work, be strong, lad,
Never a fear of bullet or shell,
You that have lived in hell for long, lad,
Needn't be fearing to die in hell.

THIEPVAL, 1915

MATRI ALMAE

CITY of hopes and golden dreaming
Set with a crown of tall grey towers,
City of mist that round you streaming
Screens the vision of vanished hours,
All the wisdom of youth far-seeing,
All the things that we meant to do,
Dreams that will never be clothed in being,
Mother, your sons have left with you.

Clad in beauty of dreams begotten
Strange old city for ever young,
Keep the visions that we've forgotten,
Keep the songs we have never sung.
So shall we hear your music calling,
So from a land where songs are few
When the shadows of life are falling,
Mother, your sons come back to you.

So with the bullets above us flying,
So in the midst of horror and pain
We shall come back from the sorrow of dying
To wander your magical ways again.
For that you keep and grow not older
All the beauty we ever knew,
As the fingers of death grow colder,
Mother, your sons come back to you.

In the Leave Train, 1915

BEFORE THE SUMMER

WHEN our men are marching lightly up and down,
When the pipes are playing through the little town,
I see a thin line swaying through wind and mud and rain
And the broken regiments come back to rest again.

Now the pipes are playing, now the drums are beat,
Now the strong battalions are marching up the street,
But the pipes will not be playing and the bayonets will not
shine,
When the regiments I dream of come stumbling down the line.

Between the battered trenches their silent dead will lie
Quiet with grave eyes staring at the summer sky.
There is a mist upon them so that I cannot see
The faces of my friends that walk the little town with me.

Lest we see a worse thing than it is to die,
Live ourselves and see our friends cold beneath the sky,
God grant we too be lying there in wind and mud and rain
Before the broken regiments come stumbling back again.

CORBIE, 1916

TO MY SISTER

IF I die to-morrow
I shall go happily.

With the flush of battle on my face
I shall walk with an eager pace
The road I cannot see.

My life burnt fiercely always,
And fiercely will go out
With glad wild fighting ringed around,
But you will be above the ground
And darkness all about.

You will not hear the shouting,
You will not see the pride,
Only with tortured memory
Remember what I used to be,
And dream of how I died.

You will see gloom and horror
But never the joy of fight.
You'll dream of me in pain and fear,
And in your dreaming never hear
My voice across the night.

My voice that sounds so gaily
Will be too far away
For you to see across your dream
The charging and the bayonet's gleam,
Or hear the words I say.

And parted by the warders
That hold the gates of sleep,
I shall be dead and happy
And you will live and weep.

THE LABYRINTH, *May* 15, 1916

IN MEMORIAM

PRIVATE D. SUTHERLAND KILLED IN ACTION IN THE
GERMAN TRENCH, MAY 16, 1916, AND THE OTHERS
WHO DIED.

SO you were David's father,
And he was your only son,
And the new-cut peats are rotting
And the work is left undone,
Because of an old man weeping,
Just an old man in pain,
For David, his son David,
That will not come again.

Oh, the letters he wrote you,
And I can see them still,
Not a word of the fighting
But just the sheep on the hill
And how you should get the crops in
Ere the year got stormier,

And the Bosches have got his body,
And I was his officer.

You were, only David's father,
But I had fifty sons
When we went up in the evening
Under the arch of the guns,
And we came back at twilight—
O God ! I heard them call
To me for help and pity
That could not help at all.

Oh, never will I forget you,
My men that trusted me,
More my sons than your fathers',
For they could only see
The little helpless babies
And the young men in their pride.
They could not see you dying,
And hold you while you died.

Happy and young and gallant,
They saw their first-born go,

But not the strong limbs broken
And the beautiful men brought low,
The piteous writhing bodies,
The screamed, " Don't leave me, Sir,"
For they were only your fathers
But I was your officer.

A CREED

OUT of the womb of time and dust of the years forgotten,
Spirit and fire enclosed in mutable flesh and bone,
Came by a road unknown the thing that is me for ever,
The lonely soul of a man that stands by itself alone.

This is the right of my race, the heritage won by my fathers,
Theirs by the years of fighting, theirs by the price they paid,
Making a son like them, careless of hell or heaven,
A man that can look in the face of the gods and be not afraid.

Poor and weak is my strength and I cannot war against heaven,
Strong, too strong are the gods ; but there is one thing that
I can

Claim like a man unshamed, the full reward of my virtues,
Pay like a man the price for the sins I sinned as a man.

Now is the time of trial, the end of the years of fighting,
And the echoing gates roll back on the country I cannot see.
If it be life that waits I shall live for ever unconquered,
If death I shall die at last strong in my pride and free.

VIMY RIDGE, 1916

PEACE UPON EARTH

UNDER the sky of battle, under the arch of the guns,
Where in a mad red torrent the river of fighting runs,
Where the shout of a strong man sounds no more than a broken
groan,
And the heart of a man rejoicing stands up in its strength
alone,
There in the hour of trial ; and when the battle is spent,
And we sit drinking together, laughing and well content,
Deep in my heart I am hearing a little still voice that sings,
“ Well, but what will you do when there comes an end of these
things ? ”

Laughter, hard drinking and fighting, quarrels of friend and
friend,
The eyes of the men that trust us, of all these there is an end.
No more in the raving barrage in one swift clamorous breath
We shall jest and curse together on the razor-edge of death.
Old days, old ways, old comrades, for ever and ever good-bye !

We shall walk no more in the twisted ways of the trenches, you
and I,

For the nations have heard the tidings, they have sworn that
wars shall cease,

And it's all one damned long Sunday walk down the straight,
flat road of peace.

Yes, we shall be raptured again by the frock-coat's singular
charm,

That goes so well with children and a loving wife on your arm,
Treading a road that is paved with family dinners and teas,
A sensible dull suburban road planted with decorous trees,
Till we come at last to the heaven our peaceable saints have
trod,

Like the sort of church that our fathers built and called it a
house of God,

And a God like a super-bishop in an apron and nice top-hat—
O God, you are God of battles. Forbid that we come to that !

God, you are God of soldiers, merry and rough and kind,
Give to your sons an earth and a heaven more to our mind,
Meat and drink for the body, laughter and song for the soul,
And fighting and clean quick death to end and complete the
whole.

Never a hope of heaven, never a fear of hell,
Only the knowledge that you are a soldier, and all is well,
And whether the end be death or a merrier life be given,
We shall have died in the pride of our youth—and that will be
heaven.

On the road to Etricourt, 1916

THE VOLUNTEER

I TOOK my heart from the fire of love,
Molten and warm not yet shaped clear,
And tempered it to steel of proof
Upon the anvil-block of fear.

With steady hammer-strokes I made
A weapon ready for the fight,
And fashioned like a dagger-blade
Narrow and pitiless and bright.

Cleanly and tearlessly it slew,
But as the heavy days went on
The fire that once had warmed it grew
Duller, and presently was gone.

Oh, innocence and lost desire,
I strive to kindle you in vain,
Dead embers of a greying fire.
I cannot melt my heart again.

1914-1916

ON VIMY RIDGE

ON Vimy Ridge four months ago
We lived and fought, my friends and I,
And watched the kindly dawn come slow,
Peace bringing from the eastern sky.
Now I sit in a quiet town
Remembering how I used to go
Among the dug-outs up and down,
On Vimy Ridge four months ago.

And often sitting here I've seen,
As then I saw them every night,
The friendly faces tired and keen
Across the flickering candle-light,
And heard their laughter gay and clear,
And watched the fires of courage glow
Above the scattered ash of fear,
On Vimy Ridge four months ago.

Oh, friends of mine, where are you now ?
Somewhere beneath the troubled sky,
With earth above the quiet brow,
Reader and Stalk for ever lie.
But dead or living out or here
I see the friends I used to know,
And hear the laughter gay and clear,
On Vimy Ridge four months ago.

IN MEMORIAM

R. M. STALKER. MISSING, SEPTEMBER 1916

AS I go down the highway,
And through the village street,
I hear the pipers playing

And the tramp of marching feet.
The men I worked and fought with
Swing by me four on four,
And at the end you follow
Whom I shall see no more.

Oh, Stalk, where are you lying?
Somewhere and far away,
Enemy hands have buried
Your quiet contemptuous clay.
There was no greeting given,
No tear of friend for friend,
From us when you flew over
Exultant to the end.

I couldn't see the paper,
I couldn't think that you
Would never walk the highway
The way you used to do.
I turn at every footfall,
Half-hoping, half-afraid
To see you coming, later
Than usual for parade.

The old Lairg clique is broken,
I drove there yesterday,
And the car was full of ghosts that sat
Beside me all the way.
Ghosts of old songs and laughter,
Ghosts of the jolly three,
That went the road together
And go no more with me.

Oh, Stalk, but I am lonely,
For the old days we knew,
And the bed on the floor at Lesdos
We slept in, I and you.

The joyful nights in billets

We laughed and drank and swore—
But the candle's burned out now, Stalk,
In the mess at Henancourt.

The candle's burned out now, old man,
And the dawn's come grey and cold,
And I sit by the fire here
Alone and sad and old.

Though all the rest come back again,
You lie in a foreign land,
And the strongest link of all the chain
Is broken in my hand.

II

OTHER POEMS

THE KINGDOM OF THE DOWNS

B EYOND the woodland's shading,
Beyond the sun-kissed field,
Where laughs in joy unfading
The garden of the weald,
Look southward where uplifted
Against the shining skies,
In secret vesture shifted,
The silent Downs arise.

Until you see delusive
Flash from the guardian down
A visioned land elusive,
Dream of an unknown town,
And longing for the wonder,
Strive what you dare not ask,
To rend the veil asunder
And pluck away the mask.

Oh keep your spirit's vision
Although your eyes be blind,
Nor tempt the gods' derision
Of him that cannot find,
Lest you should lose the city
That once afar you saw,
And with it lose—ah, pity !—
All that was yours before.

Better dream on for ever
What once you dreamt was true,
Ere knowledge can dis sever
Your visioned truth from you,
And from the wealden gazing
Watch how the sunset crowns
With dreamful beacons blazing
Your kingdom of the Downs.

IN THE TRAIN, 1911

TO THE UNKNOWN LOVE

I CANNOT see you in the light
Or find you in the day,
For when the sun springs up at dawn
I think you slip away.

I wait until the night is come
To pass beyond the veil,
And then I find you in the land
Of the unuttered tale.

Then gazing out across the night
I see with glad surmise
The shadows of your loosened hair,
The depth of your grave eyes.

ST PAUL'S, 1912

TO CATULLUS

A RONDEL

LAUGHTER and tears to you the gods once gave,
Those silver tears upon your brother's grave,
And golden laughter in your lady's bower,
And silver-gold in your love's bitter hour.
You showed us, burdened with our hopes and fears,
Laughter and tears.

Poor tears that fell upon the thirsty sands,
Poor laughter stifled with ungentle hands,
Poor heart that was so sweet to laugh and cry,
Your joyful, mournful songs shall never die,
But show us still across the shadowing years
Laughter and tears.

ST PAUL'S, 1912

MALLAIG BAY

I AM sickened of the south and the kindness of the downs,
And the weald that is a garden all the day,
And I'm weary for the islands and the Scur that always frowns,
And the sun rising over Mallaig Bay.

I am sickened of the pleasant down and pleasant weald below,
And the meadows where the little breezes play,
And I'm weary for rain-cloud over stormy Coolin's brow,
And the wind blowing into Mallaig Bay.

I am sickened of the people that have ease in what they earn,
The happy folk who have forgot to pray,
And I'm weary for the faces that are sorrowful and stern,
And the boats coming into Mallaig Bay.

SUSSEX, 1912

VERSES TO TWO CHILDREN

WITH A COPY OF LEAR'S "NONSENSE RHYMES"

DARLINGS, if I may call you so,
I fear that I can only sing
Of sorrows that your elders know.
To you I send a better thing.

Oh may you wander many a day
Across the great Gromboolian plain,
Because, when I was far away,
You came and brought me back again.

Because, when darkness covered me,
You came and took me by the hand,
And opened my blind eyes to see
The little hills of Fairyland.

BRORA, 1912

IN THE NIGHT

GALLANT fellows, tall and strong,
Oh your strength was not for long,
Now within its bed alone
Quiet lies your nerveless bone.

Merry maidens young and fair,
Now your heads are bleached and bare,
Grinning mouths that smiled so sweet,
Buried deep the dancing feet.

Men and maidens fair and brave
Resting in your darkened grave,
Have you left the light behind,
Will you never feel the wind ?

Oh I know not if you may,
But from eve till dawn of day
Terror holds me in my bed,
Terror of the living dead.

OXFORD, 1912

CAROL OF THE INNOCENTS

AS I look out upon the sky
And watch the clouds come driving by,
I know when for a moment's space
I see a laughing baby's face,
It is the Innocents that ride
Across the sky at Christmastide.

Above the world they dance and play,
And they are happy all the day,
And welcome on the joyous morn
A little king among them born.
God looks upon them as they go,
And laughs to see them frolic so.

Their little clouds are stained with red
To show how shamefully they bled,

And all above the world they sing
A carol to their childish King.
It is the Innocents that ride
Across the sky at Christmastide.

CHRISTMAS, 1913

WANDERER'S DESIRE

TO E. J. S. AND F. O. T.

I CANNOT sleep for thinking
Of things that I have seen
About the highways of the world,
Where fields are fresh and green,
And hedges lie on either hand
With a white road between.

I cannot rest for dreaming
Of places I have known,
The grasses of the lonely hills,
The meadows and the sown,
And all the secrets which appear
To men who walk alone.

The comrades of my walking
Are calling me to go,

And stroll with them across the hills
Along a road we know,
Past inns where we can drink and talk
When storm-winds bring the snow.

I cannot rise and follow
The way they're calling me,
So I sit dreaming all the day,
And all the day I see
The open highways of the world
Where I would like to be.

OXFORD, 1913

GROWING PAINS

I

MY virtue is gone from me. Nevermore
Shall I see all the flowers and grasses plain,
But only sit and think how once I saw,
And only pray that I may see again.
And in my ears all melody will die,
And on my lips the songs I make will fade,
And I shall only hear in memory
A far-off echo of the songs I made.
And the old happy vision of God's grace,
Where I have mingled with eternal light,
Will comfort me no more, but in its place
There will be darkness and eternal night ;
And faintly in the darkness you will move,
And I shall keep the memory of love.

II

I cannot see your face, I cannot see

The hair back-sweeping from your candid brow,
For night eternal overshadows me,

And eyes that saw you once are sightless now
I cannot hear the music of your voice

That was so beautiful while I could hear,
But only wait upon you and rejoice

To know that in the darkness you are near.
Oh come to me, my dear, and loose my chain,

And with your magic break the evil spell,
And bring me back into the light again

To the fair country where I used to dwell.
For now my ears are deaf, my eyes are blind,
And endless darkness gathers in my mind.

III

The end has come for me, the end has come,

The fairies have rung out their silver bell,
And after time will find and leave me dumb

With no more tales of fairyland to tell.

The end has come for me, the end of all,
Of song half-uttered and of quick desire,
And hopes that strained to heaven in their fall,
And high dreams fashioned out of clay and fire.
The earth is black about me, and the sun
Is blotted out with darkness overhead,
There is no hope to comfort me not one,
For love has stolen away, and faith has fled,
And life that once was mine has passed me by,
And I am desolate and shall not die.

IV

There is a city built with walls of gold,
Which is the birthplace of the fairy kings,
Full of strange songs and stories yet untold,
And all the happiness that childhood brings.
The city's gates are open night and day,
And night and day the travellers ride through,
And many that have wandered far away
Would reach again the happy town they knew.
But they can only watch the vision die,
And hear the music cease along the strand,

And from the merry dancing-ring no cry
Comes down the falling wind to where they stand,
And so they turn away again to try
The darkness of the undiscovered land.

OXFORD, 1913

SONNET

EACH time we meet, my dear, I fancy you,
A maiden both familiar and strange,
For still I see a girl I never knew
And see my own dear love without a change ;
And while young love is born within my heart,
As on his birthday half a year ago,
I mourn that we are kept so long apart,
And welcome joyfully the love I know.
As when a rover under foreign skies
From some clear hill beholds a smiling plain,
And long-forgotten meadows meet his eyes,
And memory awakens in his brain,
And suddenly he sees with glad surprise
The open doorway of his home again.

OXFORD, 1913

TO —

YOU have destroyed my early loves,
The grasses wet with dew,
And hills upon whose gentle breast
My careless boyhood grew.
I have no happiness at all
Except to be with you.

I have forgotten all the words
And laughter of my friends,
The little inns that are like homes,
The road that dips and bends ;
I hear them like a far-off song
That fails at last and ends.

It's little use for us to grieve
For things that cannot be ;
You can't give back the happiness
You took away from me.
Give me yourself, for night and day
It's only you I see.

OXFORD, 1913

DEAD YOUTH

THE days of dreams are over,
The days of songs are done,
So bid good-bye, young lover,
To boyhood's dying sun ;
Good-bye to joy and sadness,
Good-bye to sun and rain,
And to the swift spring madness
That will not come again.

Oh days of careless laughter,
Oh nights of sudden tears,
We shall not know hereafter
Forgotten hopes and fears.
Oh dreams that bide no longer
With young hearts waxen cold,
Are lovely things no stronger,
And must you too grow old ?

Yes, memory is flying,
And golden dreams must fade,
And all our loves are dying
With us beneath the shade ;
And buds that ripen never
Their bloomless leaves have shed,
For youth is dead for ever,
And all his thoughts are dead.

1913

AT THE END

IN the dim years, when earth's last sun is setting,
And all the lamps of heaven are burning low,
Will the gods grant remembrance or forgetting
Of joys and sorrows that possess us now ?

When the day ends and there is no to-morrow,
Will there be thoughts alive to hurt us yet ?
Shall we remember, keeping all our sorrow,
Or lose our little joys if we forget ?

Oh sure, since joy and pain we may not sever,
Better it is to take the whole alloy,
And keep immortal grief, than lose for ever
Our slight inheritance of immortal joy.

1913

ECCLESIASTES

OH vanity of vanities
And following of wind
Through the dim avenues and deep
Abysses of the mind ;
When will our ears be deaf at last,
When will our eyes be blind ?

Oh vanity of vanities
And lighter than the air,
And restless hearts unsatisfied
With searching everywhere ;
When will the restless heart be still,
And loosened from its care ?

Oh vanity of sorrowing
And emptiness of mirth,

And wandering fires of thought in clay
Imprisoned at our birth,
When will the wandering fires go out,
And earth return to earth ?

OXFORD, 1913

THE LOST LANDS

“ O H where are the old kingdoms,
Where is the ancient way,
And the remembered city
Where once I used to play ? ”
“ You stand within the kingdom,
You walk the city’s street,
And still there throng about you
The folk you used to meet.”

“ Where are the merry voices
And laughter trouble-free,
And where are my old comrades
That used to play with me ? ”
“ Their merry voices call you
But you will not reply.
They touch your hand in welcome,
But now you pass them by.”

“ Where is my love departed
With her delightful eyes,
And heart too free for sorrow,
And lips too proud for sighs ? ”
“ Along the road beside you
Your true love walks and near,
But she may call for ever,
And you will never hear.”

OXFORD, 1915

CLYTEMNESTRA

OUT of the drinking cup,
Out of my own hearth-fire,
The taint of blood goes up,
The scent of the burning pyre.
When the feasters' shout is high,
Or the spinning maidens sing,
I hear the dead man's cry,
The dead who was my king.

For this is an ageless thing,
And the blood runs fresh again
In the cleansing draught from the spring
And the storèd wine I drain.
And the joyous marriage-song,
And the drinking-song at the board,
Is the voice that sobbed so long
In the agony of my lord.

Oh dark stern face of him
 I wedded and could not love,
Oh terrible eyes grown dim
 And torn black hair above,
Oh hands so strong in fight,
 So weak in the folding net,
Dead feet that by day and night
 Follow the slayer yet,

Lo I am drawing near
 To the door of the house of death,
Must I for ever hear
 The sound of the labouring breath,
Must I for ever see
 The murdered body lie,
And on my own roof-tree
 The blood that will not dry ?

1914

DEDICATION

FOR "THE REMEMBERED GODS"

IF in my song the heart of love
Looks from another maiden's eyes,
Where on the hills of Morven move
The kings too proud for Paradise,
Though to your ears the autumn brings
No sounds of crying, you will know
The murmur of immortal things
In this dark tale of long ago.

If in the silence of the nights
The song of Angus calls no more,
If all the sea is ringed with lights
And no waves moaning on the shore.
Though Balor sleeping on the hills
Forgets the dew in his drenched hair,
You will remember ancient ills
Pitying another Alastair.

THREE SONGS FROM THE REMEMBERED GODS

ANGUS' SONG

ARE the gods forgotten in Morven of the hinds,
The beauty that slew men the golden eyes that shone
The gods that will bé walking on the rocks of the winds
That little men would die for the love of looking on ?

Are the gods forgotten in Morven of the stags,
The old gods, the fair gods that were too high for love,
The white feet pressing on the grasses of the crags,
The black hair hidden in the black clouds above ?

The gods are forgotten in Morven of the glens,
The sun shines brightly and gentle is the day.
Like snow in summer corries, like mist upon the bens,
The lovely gods of darkness are vanished away.

ALASTAIR'S SONG

Summer is gone at last and autumn leaves are falling,
And through the naked trees the wind is breathing low.
Let us arise and go for the old gods are calling,
The beautiful cruel gods we loved so long ago.

Let us arise and go, for far beyond the city
We hear the old gods singing the years from which we came.
The merry heartless years that knew not pain or pity,
The happy lustful years that knew not fear or shame.

The bitter music calls, and we must follow after,
Back through the gentler years to the old time again.
To wake their lovely mirth, to move the gods to laughter,
This is the end of man, the full reward of pain.

The golden eyes aglow, the silver laughter ringing,
Shall we not suffer pain for lovely things as these?
Let us arise and go, for the old gods are singing,
The beautiful cruel gods that mock our miseries.

THE MEMORY SONG

Long ago beneath the moon
In a corrie of the hills
We forgot our ancient ills
Dancing to a wizard tune.
We remembered song and spell
Chanted in a Lochlainn rune,
Flower of Morven, it was well
Long ago beneath the moon.

Now the moon is full again,
And the song of Angus cries
Underneath the summer skies
Till the nights of summer wane.
Follow now while still you may,
Ere his music calls in vain,
When the harps of Angus play
Now the moon is full again.

Flower of Morven, long ago
In the corrie where we met,
Did you think you could forget,
Did you dream you would not know

Lips that sang the lover's tune,
And the heart that loved you so ?
Did forgetfulness come soon,
Flower of Morven, long ago ?

Oh, remember me once more,
Now the mist is on the hills
And the harp of Angus thrills
Moaning waves along the shore,
For the songs I made for you,
For the love that was before,
For the heart that still is true,
Oh, remember me once more.

NEIL'S SONG

From "THE LATER WOOING"

NOW the day is growing old
And the shadows pace
Slower now, and now more cold

O'er the water's face.

When my heart is ebbing low

With the ebbing tide,

When the happy visions go,

Why should life abide ?

Now with whispers from the sea

The little winds go by

Moaning, moaning hopelessly

That the day should die.

When the hours of memory fill

All my heart with pain,

When my dreams go down the hill

Why should life remain ?

Now the world is burning out
Mountain, glen and sea.
From their barrows all about
The dead are calling me.
When my hope is flown and dead
With my love of you,
When the heart of life is fled,
Shall not life go too ?

1914

OLD AGE

IN the old years that creep on us so fast,
When Time goes by us with a halting tread,
Shall we sit still and ponder at the last
The young swift years of love that will be dead ?
Shall we look back upon the passionate years,
Where in a maze our younger figures move,
Instinct with half-forgotten hopes and fears,
And gaze anew on the mirage of love ?

Yes, we two, like old actors at the play,
Watching the beating of a tinsel heart,
Will laugh and weep, and clap our hands, and say,
“ How sadly that young lover played his part
That loved her true and dared not tell her so,
And she that loved him dared not let him see,”
And we shall watch the hurts of long ago,
And clap our hands at our old tragedy.

For we shall understand, remembering
How he spoke thus and she would answer so,
And then we shall see clearly everything
That was so dark in youth's old puppet-show,
And gazing on the far-off stage where stand
The misty figures that were you and I,
Each in the darkness will stretch out a hand
To touch the hand of love before we die.

OXFORD, 1914

THE HEARTLESS VOICE

YOUR voice is like the fairy harps
The wandering shepherd hears,
That tell of laughter without joy,
And light unsaddened tears.

You laugh and I can never tell
If you are glad or no,
You weep and cannot understand
The things that hurt me so.

But still your eager, heartless voice
Is calling night and day,
And I must follow like the men
That hear the fairies play.

1914

HOPE

WHERE is the life of springs forgotten,
The happy life of years grown old ?
Their bloomless buds are dead and rotten,
The suns that warmed their leaves are cold.
And we that walk the ruined garden
Watch the dry breath of winter harden
In all its beds the barren mould.

Where is the joy of daily meeting
In spring-time when the sun was high ?
The winter suns are pale and fleeting,
The gathering clouds o'ercast the sky.
And we that walk alone remember
The fires whose last undying ember
Will burn our hearts until we die.

Oh, heart of youth, too full of sorrow,
Be strong and hold your sorrow fast.

The bitter day and bitter morrow,
That hurt you now, will soon be past.
Winter and spring will end hereafter,
An end of tears, an end of laughter,
And you shall have content at last.

There where the flowers and grasses cover
The lips that laugh, the eyes that weep,
Lover shall meet again with lover,
No man shall break the tryst they keep.
You shall fulfil desire with dreaming
There where all life is inward seeming,
There where the heart of life is sleep.

1914

THE LAST MEETING

LAST time you met me shadowed white,
A very queen for stateliness,
And all the jewels of the night
Were tangled in your ivory dress.
Your eyes were strange, your lovely smile
As though we never met before—
I saw you such a little while,
Who shall not see you evermore.

God knows the gates were strong between,
But still my trumpet might have blown
Had you not looked so great a queen,
Had I but seen you all alone.
But there we sat the dinner through
And talked like strangers of the war.
only spoke an hour with you,
Who now shall speak with you no more.

Maybe I waited over-long,
 You spoke no word to tell me so.
Perhaps the gates might be too strong
 For any blast that I could blow—
Ah well, it hardly matters now,
 My whispering ghost drifts through the rain,
The shroud of death is at my brow,
 I shall not come to you again.

1915

VALE ATQUE AVE

IS it good-bye for ever
For us beneath the sun ?
The lads and girls go over,
With every girl a lover,
And never a lonely one,
But I shall see you never
Till all my days are done.

I could not read your letter,
I could not think it true,
Seeing the lands and hedges
And the long naked ridges
And skies serene and blue.
Though worse should come or better
I walk no more with you.

And I saw the winter weather
And the joyous days of spring.

In all the years before us
God knows what fate hangs o'er us,
What good or evil thing,
But we'll walk no more together
Whatever time may bring.

Love is not dead but sleeping,
Youth is not spent in vain.
Another hand will hold me,
And other arms enfold me,
To feel in every vein
The blood of youth go leaping ;
But you come not again.

You've gone, and with you flying
The grace of life is past,
And I go robbed and wanting
Till with a little panting
My labouring life ebbs fast,
And I look up in dying
And see you at the last.

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